



# Department of Defense INSTRUCTION

NUMBER 1304.26

September 20, 2005

Incorporating Change 1, July 11, 2007

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USD(P&R)

SUBJECT: Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction

- References:
- (a) DoD Directive 1304.26, same as above, December 21, 1993 (hereby canceled)
  - (b) Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "DoD Directives Review – Phase II," July 13, 2005
  - (c) Sections 504, 505, 520, 532, 654, ~~3253, 8253~~, 12102, 12201 of title 10, United States Code
  - (d) Section 313 of title 32, United States Code
  - (e) through ~~(h)~~(f), see enclosure 1

## 1. REISSUANCE AND PURPOSE

This Instruction:

- 1.1. Reissues Reference (a) as a DoD Instruction according to the guidance in Reference (b).
- 1.2. Updates policies and responsibilities for basic entrance qualification standards for enlistment, appointment, and induction into the Armed Forces in accordance with Reference (c) and delegates the authority to specify certain standards to the Secretaries of the Military Departments.
- 1.3. Establishes the age, citizenship, education, aptitude, physical fitness, dependency status, moral character, and other disqualifying conditions that are causes for rejection from military service. Other standards may be prescribed in the event of mobilization or national emergency.
- 1.4. Sets standards designed to ensure that individuals under consideration for enlistment, appointment, and/or induction are able to perform military duties successfully, and to select those who are the most trainable and adaptable to Military Service life.

*Change 1, 7/11/2007*

## 2. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

This Instruction applies to:

2.1. The Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities in the Department of Defense (hereafter referred to as the "DoD Components"). The term "Military Services," as used herein, refers to the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard (by agreement with the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security when it is not operating as a Service in the Navy), and their Reserve components.

2.2. Applicants for initial enlistment into the regular Armed Forces and the Reserve components.

2.3. Applicants for appointment as commissioned or warrant officers in the Active and Reserve components.

2.4. Applicants for reenlistment following release from active duty into subsequent Active or Reserve components (including the Army National Guard of the United States and the Air National Guard of the United States) after a period of more than 6 months has elapsed since discharge.

2.5. Applicants for the scholarship or advanced course Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), and all other Armed Forces special officer personnel procurement programs, including the Military Service Academies.

2.6. All individuals being inducted into the Armed Forces.

## 3. DEFINITION

Reserve Components. Includes the Army National Guard of the United States, the Army Reserve, the Naval Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve, the Air National Guard of the United States, the Air Force Reserve, and the Coast Guard Reserve.

## 4. POLICY

It is DoD policy to:

4.1. Encourage to the maximum extent practical the use of common entrance qualification standards.

4.2. Avoid inconsistencies and inequities based on gender, race, religion, or ethnicity in the application of these standards by the Military Services.

4.3. Judge the suitability of persons to serve in the Armed Forces on the basis of their adaptability, potential to perform, and conduct.

4.4. The standards in enclosure 2 shall be used to determine the entrance qualifications for all individuals being enlisted, appointed, or inducted into any component of the Military Services

## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)). The USD(P&R) shall:

5.1.1. Review, coordinate, approve, and issue modifications to the standards in Enclosure 2.

5.1.2. Ensure the U.S. Military entrance processing command assists the Military Services in implementing these standards.

5.2. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (ASD). The ASD (Reserve Affairs), under the USD(P&R), shall act as an advisor to the USD(P&R) on the Reserve enlistment and appointment standards.

5.3. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD). The ASD (Health Affairs), under the USD(P&R), shall act as an advisor to the USD(P&R) on the physical and medical aspects of these standards.

5.4. Secretaries of the Military Departments. The Secretaries of the Military Departments:

5.4.1. Shall ensure conformance with this Instruction.

5.4.2. Shall recommend suggested changes to this Instruction to the USD(P&R).

5.4.3. Shall establish other standards as necessary to implement this Instruction.

5.4.4. Shall review all standards on an annual basis.

5.4.5. Shall establish procedures to grant waivers to the standards, as permitted by law, in individual cases for appropriate reasons.

5.4.6. May issue generalized exceptions to these standards as permitted by law, with approval from the USD(P&R).

6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Instruction is effective immediately.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David S. C. Chu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

**David S. C. Chu**  
**Under Secretary of Defense**  
**(Personnel and Readiness)**

Enclosures – 2

E1. References, continued

E2. Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction

E1. ENCLOSURE 1

REFERENCES, continued

~~(e) Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Government of the  
— Federated States of Micronesia and the Government of the Marshall Islands, 99 Stat. 1770  
— (2003) (reprinted as amended at 48 U.S.C.A. 1681 note)~~

~~(f)(e)~~ DoD Instruction 1145.1, "Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower,"  
~~January 22, 1986-September 20, 2005~~

~~(g)(f)~~ DoD Directive 6130.3, "Physical Standards for Appointment, Enlistment, ~~and or~~  
Induction," December 15, 2000

## E2. ENCLOSURE 2

### QUALIFICATION STANDARDS FOR ENLISTMENT, APPOINTMENT, AND INDUCTION

#### E2.1. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

E2.1.1. Entrance Considerations. Accession of qualified individuals shall be a priority when processing applicants for the Military Services.

E2.1.2. Eligibility. Eligibility shall be determined by the applicant's ability to meet all requirements of this Instruction, to include obtaining waivers. Applicants shall not be enlisted, appointed, or inducted unless fully qualified.

#### E2.2. BASIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.

##### E2.2.1. Age.

E2.2.1.1. For service in the regular components, the minimum age for enlistment is 17 years and the maximum age is ~~35~~42 years in accordance with Reference (c). The maximum age for a prior service enlistee is determined by adding the individual's years of prior service to age ~~35~~42. The Secretary concerned shall establish enlistment age standards for the Reserve components in accordance with section 12102 of Reference (c).

E2.2.1.2. Age limitations for appointment as a commissioned or warrant officer normally depend on the Military Service concerned. By law and in accordance with section 532 of Reference (c), most persons appointed as commissioned officers must be able to complete 20 years of active commissioned service before their 62nd birthday to receive a regular commission. Persons receiving an original appointment as a medical or dental officer, chaplain, or officers designated for limited duty are not subject to this requirement, in accordance with section 532 (d)(1) of Reference (c).

E2.2.1.3. In accordance with section 12201 of Reference (c), a person shall be at least 18 years of age for appointment as a Reserve Officer. In prescribing the age qualification for appointment as a Reserve officer, the Secretary of the Military Department concerned may not prescribe a maximum standard of less than 47 years for the initial appointment of a person who shall serve as a medical, dental, or nurse officer in a specialty designated by the Secretary concerned as critically needed in wartime.

### E2.2.2. Citizenship.

E2.2.2.1. To be eligible for enlistment ~~in the Regular Army or the Air Force in time of peace~~ or appointed as a warrant officer, ~~in accordance with section 504 of Reference (c)~~, an individual must be an American citizen, ~~or~~ lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence ~~in accordance with Section 3253 and 8253-504 of reference (e)~~, or an individual described in one of the following compacts: *The Compact of Free Association between the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States, The compact of Free Association between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States, or The Compact of Free Association Between Palau and the United States. Section 3253 and 8253 of reference (e). There is no equivalent statute limiting enlistment in the Regular Navy and the Marine Corps, but they usually apply the same citizenship requirements as those required for the Army and the Air Force. However, the Secretary concerned may authorize the enlistment of a person not described above if the Secretary determines that such enlistment is vital to the national interest.*

E2.2.2.2. To be eligible for enlistment in the Reserve components, an individual must be a citizen of the United States or lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence in accordance with section 12102 of Reference (c).

E2.2.2.3. To be eligible for appointment as a regular officer, U.S. citizenship is required unless waived by the Secretary of Defense for an original appointment *of a person who has been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence* in a grade below the grade of Major or Lieutenant Commander. For Reserve appointment, an individual must be either a citizen or lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence in accordance with section 12201 of R. National Guard officers must be U.S. citizens in accordance with 32 U.S.C. 313 (Reference (d)).

~~E2.2.2.4. Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia or the Republic of the Marshall Islands also are eligible for enlistment in the Active and Reserve components in accordance with the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Government of the Marshall Islands (reference (e)).~~

### E2.2.3. Education

E2.2.3.1. Possession of a high school diploma is desirable, although not mandatory, for enlistment in any component of the Military Services. Section 520 of Reference (c) states that a person who is not a high school graduate may not be accepted for enlistment in the Armed Forces unless the score of that person on the Armed Forces qualification test (AFQT) is at or above the thirty-first percentile. However, a person may not be denied enlistment in the Armed Forces solely because he or she does not have a high school diploma if his or her enlistment is needed to meet established strength requirements.

E2.2.3.2. Bearers of alternative credential (e.g., general educational development certificates and certificates of attendance) and non-graduates may be assigned lower enlistment priority based on first-term attrition rates for those credentials. DoD Directive 1145.1

(Reference ~~(f)~~(e)) identifies the authority for establishing the qualitative distribution objectives for accessions.

E2.2.3.3. Educational requirements for appointment as a commissioned or warrant officer are determined by each Military Service. Section 12205 of Reference (c) established education requirements for certain reserve appointments. Generally, a baccalaureate degree is required as a prerequisite for a commission or appointment. In addition, special occupations (e.g., physician, chaplain) may require additional vocational credentials, which are determined by the Secretary concerned.

#### E2.2.4. Aptitude.

E2.2.4.1. Overall aptitude requirements for enlistment and induction are based on applicant scores on the AFQT derived from the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. Applicant scores are grouped into percentile categories. Persons who score in AFQT Category V (percentiles 1-9) are ineligible to enlist. By law, in accordance with section 520 of Reference (c), the number of persons who enlist during any fiscal year (i.e., accession cohort) who score in AFQT Category IV (percentiles 10-30) may not exceed 20 percent of the total number of persons enlisted. Reference ~~(f)~~(e) identifies the authority for establishing the qualitative distribution objectives for accessions.

E2.2.4.2. Generally, for officers and warrant officers, no single test or instrument is used as an aptitude requirement for appointment.

#### E2.2.5. Physical Fitness.

E2.2.5.1. DoD Directive 6130.3 (reference ~~(g)~~(f)) establishes the policy and standards for entrance.

E2.2.5.2. The pre-accession screening process should be structured to identify individuals with any medical condition that disqualifies an applicant for military service.

#### E2.2.6. Dependency Status.

E2.2.6.1. Reference (c) does not specifically address eligibility requirements for single parents.

E2.2.6.2. The Military Services may not enlist married individuals with more than two dependents under the age of 18 or unmarried individuals with custody of any dependents under the age of 18. However, the Secretary concerned may grant a waiver for particularly promising entrants.

E2.2.6.3. The Military Services shall specify the circumstances under which individuals who have dependents may become commissioned officers or warrant officers; variations in policy may be affected by the commissioning source (e.g., the Service Academy versus, the ROTC, or the Officer Candidate School; ROTC scholarship status, etc.).



E2.2.7. Moral Character. Persons entering the Armed Forces should be of good moral character. The underlying purpose of moral character enlistment standards is to minimize entrance of persons who are likely to become disciplinary cases or security risks or who disrupt good order, morale, and discipline. The Military Services are responsible for the defense of the nation and should not be viewed as a source of rehabilitation for those who have not subscribed to the legal and moral standards of society at large. Moral standards of acceptability for service are designed to disqualify the following categories of persons:

E2.2.7.1. Individuals under any form of judicial restraint (bond, probation, imprisonment, and/or parole).

E2.2.7.2. Those with significant criminal records. Section 504 of Reference (c) prohibits any person who has been convicted of a felony from being enlisted in any of the Armed Forces. The Secretary concerned may authorize exceptions in meritorious cases.

E2.2.7.2.1. Persons convicted of felonies may request a waiver to permit their enlistment. The waiver procedure is not automatic and approval is based on each individual case, including consideration of the individual's adjustment to civilian life.

E2.2.7.2.2. In processing waiver requests, the Military Services shall require information about the "who, what, when, where, and/or why" of the offense in question; and a number of letters of recommendation from responsible community leaders; such as school officials, ministers, and law enforcement officials, attesting to the applicant's character or suitability for enlistment.

E2.2.7.3. Those who have been previously separated from the Military Services under conditions other than honorable or for the good of the Military Service concerned.

E2.2.7.4. Those who have exhibited antisocial behavior or other traits of character that may render them unfit to associate with military personnel.

E2.2.8. Provisions Related to Homosexual Conduct.

E2.2.8.1. A person's sexual orientation is considered a personal and private matter, and is not a bar to service entry or continued service unless manifested by homosexual conduct in the manner described in section 654 of Reference (c). Applicants for enlistment, appointment, or induction shall not be asked or required to reveal their sexual orientation nor shall they be asked to reveal whether they have engaged in homosexual conduct, unless independent evidence is received indicating an applicant engaged in such conduct or the applicant volunteers a statement that he or she is a homosexual or bisexual, or words to that effect.

E2.2.8.2. Applicants shall be informed of separation policy in accordance with section 654 of Reference (c). Failure to receive such information shall not constitute a defense in any administrative or disciplinary proceeding.

E2.2.8.3. Nothing in these procedures requires rejection for entry into the Armed Forces when the relevant Military Service Command authority determines:

E2.2.8.3.1. An applicant or inductee made a statement, engaged in acts, or married or attempted to marry a person of the same sex for the purpose of avoiding Military Service; and/or

E2.2.8.3.2. Rejection of the applicant or inductee may not be in the best interest of the Armed Forces.